

AC and Ned

A. C. (*In response, grunting, perhaps:*) (Right, but this time you're wearing a jacket.)

DAVE. Okay—clearly you two are gonna be just fine.

(DAVE exits through the Hallway door. There is a brief silence, as A. C. works—attaching NED's mic, testing the mic, etc.—while NED observes him. The silence soon makes NED comfortable enough to speak.)

NED. I'm not sure I'm even gonna need this mic. (*Beat.* A. C. says nothing.) I mean, even when there's not a camera, I'm not great at talking. (*Beat.*) Which is... maybe something you and I have in common.

A. C. (*Beat.*) Uh-huh.

NED. (*Encouraged by getting a response:*) But you see people talk on camera every day. You probably think it's ridiculous for me to be nervous about being on TV.

A. C. (*With a shrug—meaning "I wouldn't exactly say that":*) Well...

NED. What. What does that mean?

A. C. (*The shrug.*) I'm just saying...

NED. What? That I should be nervous?

A. C. (*The shrug.*) Well...

NED. What does that mean?

A. C. (*The shrug.*) I'm just saying...

NED. No you're not, you're not saying anything.

A. C. The last time you went on TV... (*The shrug.*)

NED. I looked like an ass.

A. C. Yeah. But look, the truth is... most people who go on TV make asses of themselves.

NED. Do they?

A. C. Oh yeah. God yeah—

NED. Okay. I'm not sure this is helping—

A. C. Especially politicians—

NED. Yeah, definitely not helping—

A. C. But, you know, most politicians are asses to begin with. (*Realizing who he's saying this to:*) Ha! See? This is why I don't talk to people.

NED. No, I wouldn't disagree with that. There's an awful lot of idiots in politics. Though I don't know why that is.

A. C. Because no sane, intelligent person would want to work in government? (*Realizing:*) Okay, I'm gonna— (*Gesture meaning "zip it."*)

NED. Why would you say that?

A. C. Nah, forget it.

NED. No, tell me. Why would no intelligent person want to work in government?

A. C. Because... what is government? What does it do? Right? What good, honest purpose does it serve? I suppose it... *has* to exist, and always *will* exist, but... Government, politics, what does that have to do with... I'm sorry, but... *real life*? It has nothing to do with *my* life. I pay my taxes. I bitch about it, but I pay, and then all that money gets spent on... whatever—whatever politicians *spend* money on, when they're not busy trashing other politicians, or looking into my TV camera and lying every time they open their mouths. Right? (*Beat.*) Why should I pay attention to that? Why should I care? Life is crowded enough as it is. I've got a brother who's out of work, needs help paying his rent. I've got a friend who's been in and out of the hospital. And my wife and I... just want to make it to the weekend so we can spend time with our two boys, who are... awesome, and... important. That's real life. Government is... over there. Making a lot of noise. If you listen to it. But... why listen to it?

NED. (*Beat.*) I'm sorry about your friend in the hospital.

A. C. (*Feeling a little awkward:*) Thanks. I don't know why I brought her up.

NED. Well—real life, like you said.

A. C. Yeah.

NED. What kind of work is your brother in?

A. C. He was teaching high school, in Fairview. Got laid off.

NED. Was that... a public school?

A. C. (*With earned cynicism, as he's talking to a politician:*) You gonna get him a job, Governor?

NED. I'm honestly just wondering.

A. C. I don't know why I told you all that.

NED. I asked you a question. And you answered it. That's what Dave keeps telling me about this interview with Rachel: it's just a conversation.